I: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

favour and the people will not prosper and may suffer from sore eyes. It is not necessary that everyone should visit the lake in person; gifts can be given by proxy by another member of the same *ptso*.

There is another lake, *Luksom partam*, high up in Zongu, from whence birth is meant to have originated. Sterile couples who wish for children should visit this lake, spend the night on its bank copulating, and then in the morning throw into the waters a silver rupee and a *chimi* (altar light) to please the gods. If necessary this may be repeated annually for three years. The old widow, a nun, who told me about this had performed the complete rite with her husband, but unsuccessfully.

The connection between water and birth runs all through the Mun mythology. In the divine world where the two gods Tak-bo-*thing* and Narzong-*nyou* live there is a stream called Lungfung which represents the birth of male children, and a well called Rung-zel *oong-lap* which represents the birth of female children. This well is guarded by a supernatural boy called Sathim *ong*, and on occasion a family which has many girls and no boys will get a Mun to make sacrifices to the boy and the two gods to make the two pieces of water change place.

It will be noted that even in the case of these sacred lakes an explicit distinction is made between the lakes themselves and the supernaturals who inhabit them.

Devils have been occasionally seen by some people, sometimes looking like fierce animals, sometimes more or less like human beings (though generally covered with hair), sometimes as misty and gigantic shapes. They are far more frequently heard, whistling and crying, sometimes wailing like a banshee; and the god of hunters, Pong *rum*, persecutes those who displease him with poltergeist-like performances, throwing stones at the people or their houses and so on. To see or hear a devil is alarming, but not excessively so; there is nothing to be done except to run away or to turn aside one's eyes; though some bold people throw stones at devils and shoo them away as though they were marauding dogs. In the case of poltergeist performances the sufferer will burn incense, or perhaps just smoke a cigarette at the devil. To guard against the accidental meeting of devils the lamas prepare amulets, composed of charms written on paper and sewn into a piece of cloth which is worn on the dress; and Mun give the specially prepared roots of *s'lek* (a dioeceous plant which grows above the snow level) to be rubbed over the body.

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of a deeper yellow-green where the cardamum grows. Scattered here and there among the prevailing greens may be seen the glow of a fruit-tree in flower, and nearby the low thatched roof of a house, barely distinguishable until you are close upon it. The paths are the faintest tracks, invisible until you come upon them; there is no main road, nothing to guide your way; except that there are usually more stones—for the bigger stones will have been removed from the neighbouring fields and piled on the path to make drier walking in the wet weather—there is little to indicate what is path and what merely rough ground. Overtowering and dwarfing all the works of man are the enormous ramparts of the gleaming snows, cutting short a quarter of the horizon in almost every direction. You can see that the land is in part cultivated and inhabited, but the part seems insignificant; in the battle between man and nature, nature seems everywhere the winner.

That is the landscape for the European; for the Lepcha not a single feature is the same. Except when they refer to them as the habitations of the high Gods, the Lepchas do not remember the mountains; they do not lift up their eyes, they look down on the ground. Every piece of land is meaningful for them, for every piece, unless it be the home of a supernatural, is, has been, or will be cultivated. They think and speak of their country as a poor country, demanding disproportionate labour for the food they require for themselves and their families. For them the land is not a friend; it is a material; and when they look at it they see therein the work and sweat they have fed it with all their lives. Every piece of land, every step they take, reminds them of the past and the present, of their own work and struggles, and those of their neighbours; the houses and fences they have helped to build, the land they have helped to clear and weed and harvest, the places where they have played as children, or, later, met for amorous encounter. They see too the cliffs and rocks and lonely trees where dwell the devils who menace and destroy their otherwise peaceful and happy existence; these visible signs remind them of those evil forces—disease and death, blight and famine, childlessness and enmity and quarrelling—that mar a life which, though hard enough, would otherwise be easy and friendly, full of health and happiness. The Lepchas do not see the landscape; they see the records of their lives, and of the lives of their ancestors, and of the lives to come of their children.

[p. 82 is blank]

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123 untrammelled as I had been led to believe the Lepchas still did; and that if this were really true, I wanted to see where we, in our ignorance and haste, had made mistakes. Also, there might be some things in which we could help the Lepchas. We were neither of us doctors; but we had plenty of simple medicines and would do what we could. All we wanted was to live quietly in the village: to talk to people, and see how they ordered their lives. We would give no trouble; nor did we shoot or fish. Somehow I convinced him and he agreed that we might go. He would collect coolies to carry our baggage and we could start as soon as they had finished their meal. "Could we be ready by ten o'clock?" We could.

133 We dropped quickly down to the Teesta, crossed the iron [491] suspension bridge, which was plentifully decorated with 768 votive Buddhist flags, and had struggled to the top of the pass, called Sungphyok Hlo, which is the real entrance to the Talung, by midday. This low pass is formed by a ridge that runs at right angles to the main Talung Valley and is duplicated on the other side of the river which here runs through a small gorge. I was told that it was formed in this way.

773 Konchen is the lord of all the devils. His elder daughter 823 is Chomo Hla Ri (Chomolari is on the edge of the Tibetan plateau and was climbed last year, for the first time, by Mr. F. Spencer Chapman), and his younger daughter is called Gongtuk Hlo, which is a ridge running down to the Teesta between Mangen and Singhik. Now the hill behind Lingtem is called Lungi Pano, or King Lungi, and he had a daughter named Sundem Pandi who was married to Sungphyok Hlo. The ridge opposite to Sungphyok Hlo is called Kahypo Hlo, and at one time these two were constantly quarrelling over the possession of King Lungi's daughter. Since they were unable to agree Konchen decided to put a stop to their quarrels, and so it was that he sent his daughter Gongtuk Hlo to part them. Gongtuk Hlo has remained there ever since; and thus the two have never been able to meet again.

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888 at us with his rheumy eyes. His brain was too far gone to take in much of what was said and after making a remark, which was a sinister meaningless croak rather than human speech, he would totter off again to add a few more turns to his credit. He always reminded me of a desiccated old colonel: perhaps in some previous incarnation he had snored away long hours in some comfortable London club. Anyhow, I like to think so.

136 Lingtem Monastery has no permanent inmates. It does, however, harbour large colonies of rats and fleas. I thought at first that the nightly scufflings might be some form of psychic disturbance; and as for the fleas, once one had been thoroughly bitten they ceased to cause further annoyance.

133 The view from the monastery is, in my opinion, unparalleled anywhere in the Himalaya. The building faces due north, and directly in front of us, on the far side of the river, was a splendidly wooded ridge, the top of which was still under snow when we first arrived. Away to the left we had an uninterrupted view of the Kinchinjunga peaks, with the top of Seniolchum just visible a little to one side. This in itself was a sufficiently remarkable sight: but away to the right we also had a clear view of all the peaks forming the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet. In the centre of those was Pau-hunri, here called Nahrem Hlo, and thought [823] to be the loom of Nazong Nyu, a mythical personage who appears in many Lepcha stories.

[788] 351 Outside the monastery was a row of prayer-flags, and a number of small prayer-drums had been let into one of the walls. These could be turned by the pious whenever they circled round the building. A little below was a small bamboo grove, which contained one particularly handsome tree, which I would sometimes watch for hours at a stretch, [322 137] especially when the weather was stormy. Why, I wondered, do we use the wood of this most beautiful of all trees to make the most hideous of all furniture? The Lepcha uses a great deal of bamboo in one way and another, but in his hands the finished product never looks shoddy and ugly. On

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751 The *Za-Sung* is a strip of paper wrapped round a piece of
777 bamboo and covered with a coating of lac, on which are impressed nine zeros representing eyes. This charm is usually worn on a string round the neck.

[415] The *Tshon-Sung*, or "weapon-warder," is always worn in a *Ka-Wo*, or metal charm box. This is usually of plain silver or copper, but is sometimes decorated with gold filigree work.

[523] In this box are usually kept the most precious relics and religious heirlooms of the family. These usually consist of such things as the hairs of some holy Lama, his bones, teeth, or a portion of his clothing. Nail-parings also are in much demand. These things are considered so efficacious in affording protection against weapons that Tibetans and Bhutanese are often willing to pay very high prices for them, and will not part with them for any consideration unless they believe that they are haunted or have become attended by some evil spirit which is likely to cause their owner sickness.

The *Palkyet-Sung*, or amulet of universal purpose, is considered to be particularly efficacious in averting the evil influences of physical mesmerism, disagreement between married couples, and in maintaining harmony between them.

● 823 Gold and platinum are believed to be proof against all
783 forms of pollution, but it is not often that such expensive materials can be afforded. Copper comes next in order of merit, and is preferred to silver as being less liable to pollution. Silver boxes must be sanctified by sprinkling holy water over them every morning and fumigating them with incense; but this is unnecessary with boxes of any other metal.

844 For cases of childbirth, and also for various diseases of the
751 nervous system, there are charms written on a thin strip of paper with Chinese ink. These are rolled into a pill, coated with butter, and given to the patient to swallow. In cases of difficult labour they are tied to the hair of the mother, on the crown of her head, in the belief that this expedites delivery of

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The place selected for the ceremony was in a small 796
clearing below the monastery. It was at the junction of several paths; and was adorned with two long walls of inscribed stones and a number of prayer-flags raised on bamboo poles. From this vantage point one had an uninterrupted view in two directions: of Kinchinjunga to the west, and of the Tibetan peaks to the east. Early in the morning two rough field altars had been prepared, one facing towards Kinchinjunga, the other looking down the valley. On the latter altar offerings would be placed to the "demons of the plains," such as send in disease and pestilence from the outside world.

In a situation such as Lingtem it is natural that Kinchin- 823 ●
junga, or Konchen as he is locally called, should be more 782
venerated than in places where the mountain is not visible. Perhaps because of this its worship forms an integral part of nearly every local ceremony, as in the present case; this, of course, is in addition to the religious celebrations in the mountain's honour which are held in the monastery on the fifteenth of every month, this day being sacred to the god.

"The mountain Kanchinjunga [*sic*], on the western border 823
of Tibet," notes Waddell, "is known to most visitors to Darjeeling and northern Bengal. This graceful mountain, second in height only to Everest,* was formerly in itself an object of worship, as it towers high above every other object in the country, and is the first to receive the rays of the rising sun and the last to part with the sunset. Kinchinjunga literally means 'the five repositories or ledges of the great snows' and is physically descriptive of its five peaks, the name having been given by the adjoining Tibetans of Tsang, who also worshipped the mountain. But the Sikkim saint, Lha-tsun Ch'embo, gave the name a mythological meaning,

* This was correct when Waddell wrote in 1894. Since then, however, Kinchinjunga (28,148 feet) has had to yield its place to K.2 (Mount Godwin Austen: 28,250 feet) in the Karakoram. It is now the third highest mountain in the world. The error has not, however, been noted in the 1934 edition of Waddell's book.

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and the mountain was made to become merely the habitation of the god of that name and the five 'repositories' became real store-houses of the god's treasure. The peak which is most conspicuously gilded by the rising sun is the treasury of gold; the peak which remains in cold grey shade is the silver treasury, and the other peaks are the stores of gems and grain and holy books. This idea of treasure naturally led to the god being physically represented somewhat after the style of 'the god of wealth.' He is of a red colour, clad in armour, and carries a banner of victory, and is mounted on a white lion. He is on the whole a good-natured god, but rather impassive, and is therefore less worshipped than the more actively malignant deities."

The altar for Konchen was properly finished, and constructed from freshly cut branches of trees. That facing down the valley, however, was only very roughly constructed and consisted of little more than a few ferns on top of a beaten-down bush. These two altars were later to contain the sacrifices offered by the Mun, whose part in the ceremony it will be convenient to describe first.

When we arrived Gongyop was busy preparing an object known as *Rum*. This was a circular basket, filled with earth, about one foot in diameter, with ferns placed round its edges. While he was making this, others were constructing *Mung Patoong*, or devils' walking-sticks. These are bamboo sticks about two feet long with the tops frayed out to look like flowers, and were later decorated with petunias, everlasting flowers, and red roses from the monastery garden. These *Mung Patoong*, eight in number, were now stuck into the back of the *Rum* in the form of a semicircle. In front of them was a similar row of slightly shorter hollow bamboo sticks, called *Tek*. In front of these again was another semicircle, also eight in number, of even smaller pieces of bamboo called *Tur*. All of these were roughly decorated with incisions cut with a knife. Later on the eight *Tek* were filled with water and the *Tur* with milk.

The *Rum* was now placed in position on the altar looking

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and then somebody of those present leaves the room immediately to search at the spot now indicated; he mostly returns within a short time with the missing objects.

While the family property is being inherited according to the old Lepcha law, the personal belongings of the dead are distributed among his closer relatives. This is usually carried out by the *Mŭn*, while still possessed by the *Mŭk nyam*. But not always is this way of dividing the heritage regarded as just, and it frequently leads to quarrels.

At the end of this ceremony, a food offering is made to the dead. A cup with some water is handed to the *Mŭn*,—who still remains in the trance —and she sprinkles some of the water on all the food which had been placed in front of her, thus making it "eatable for the deceased". Then all the members of the family step forward one by one and present a dish with food to the spirit and burn also some incense, together with traces of food, and a container filled with Lepcha beer is given to the *Mŭn* to drink. Shortly after this offering the *Mŭk nyam* leaves the body of the *Mŭn*, who soon returns to full consciousness, and then removes the rope from her left hand. Some of the Lepchas claim, that when the *Mŭn* begins to complain of pain—usually in a part of her body, corresponding to those limbs and organs of the deceased, which had been affected by the deadly illness or accident —it has to be regarded as a reliable sign, that the *Mŭk nyam* is about to leave the medium.

After a short interval, the *Mŭn* ties again the rope to her left hand and goes into a light trance, in order to guide the spirit of the dead to the other world. On the way to the *Rŭm lyang*, an obstacle called *Lep*, which is imagined to be like a tremendous waterfall or a deep precipice, has to be crossed by the *Mŭk nyam* with the assistance of the *Mŭn*. Having overcome this barrier, the spirit is met by *The kung tek*,[16] the first *Bong thing*, and his wife *Ne kung ngal*, the first *Mŭn*. They will enumerate to the deceased the line of his ancestors, mentioning on the seventh place the name of the mountain, with which his clan believes itself to be connected,[17] and then they accompany the spirit, to meet *Fă grŏng thing* and *Nă zŏng nyo*, the ancestors of the Lepchas. In the *Rŭm lyang* the spirits of all, who had died in more recent times, dwell in the form of shadows, while those who died soon after the world had been created, reside here in their bodily form, ready to return to the world should its inhabitants die out.

There are different accounts to be found among the various clans of the Lepchas regarding the way in which the *Mŭk nyam* is supposed to reach the *Rŭm lyang*. The Chronicles of the Maharajas of Sikkim mention a belief of the Sengdenmos, that the spirit goes to

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the "Place of Gods" via a subterranean passage, the entrance of which is a cave in the vicinity of Monphu, while the Heemos claim, that the spirit enters this way near a rock called Sing Dang, in the vicinity of the village Samdong. A different cave is said to be the entrance for the dead of the Lingsomo clan. This cave is called Dret gang and it lies near the hamlet of Rabdentsi. A legend current among the Namphagmo Lepchas claims that the dead of this clan do not go to Mt Kanchenjunga, but to the Mennam mountain, which is specially sacred to this clan. They reach the mountain through a subterranean passage the entrance of which is the Phim Leb cave near Lingmo.

The funeral ceremonies end on the seventh day after the burial. At first, on the third day some rice, *ci*, and eggs were brought to the grave and after five more days had passed, a hen is sacrificed and then some prayers are said by a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* in order to chase away all malignant spirits and to cleanse the house from all evil once more.

There was no difference between the burial ceremonies of the *Bar fong mo*, the Lepcha aristocracy, and the *A den* or common people, and the dead of both groups were treated alike. Only the funeral rites for a *Mŭn* or *Bong thing* were performed in a different way. Even today, a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* is not cremated, but mostly buried according to the old custom. In his house, the dead person is dressed into the full garment of a Lepcha sorcerer and his face is covered, as customary, with a white cloth and also the coin for *Fă gróng thing* is placed on his forehead. Around the body, all his magical instruments and drugs are spread out, the latter being kept in flat, closed baskets. Furthermore, a small ladder—"to reach with its help the *Rŭm lyang*"—dried fish and birds, the beak or at least some other part of a crane, the beak of a hornbill and numerous baskets containing various foodstuffs are laid all around the corpse. The body is later placed on a bamboo stretcher, together with all objects enumerated above and carried out by the door,—and not by an opening in the wall or floor, as done at the funeral of a common man. Then the body is carried to the grave and placed in the pit in a sitting position. On the left and right sides of the dead two magical sticks (*ceng pŏ ting*),[19] as used by the sorcerer during his lifetime, are placed and then also all the various paraphernalia, which had been brought on the stretcher, is laid in the grave.

The rites which follow are just like those performed at the funeral of common people. After the ceremony of calling back the *Müh nyam* has been carried out, also the spirit of a deceased *Mŭn* or *Bong thing* is conducted to the *Rŭm lyang*, to join the spirits of his ancestors.